

**Draft Summary of the Environmental Work Group Meeting
Oroville Facilities Relicensing (FERC Project No. 2100)
February 24, 2005**

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) hosted a meeting for the Environmental Work Group (EWG) on February 24, 2005 in Oroville.

A summary of the discussion, decisions made, and action items is provided below. This summary is not intended to be a transcript, analysis of the meeting, or to indicate agreement or disagreement with any of the items summarized, except where expressly stated. The intent is to present a summary for interested parties who could not attend the meeting. The following are attachments to this summary:

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| Attachment 1 | Meeting Agenda |
| Attachment 2 | Meeting Attendees |
| Attachment 3 | Final Report, Fish Species Composition in Lake Oroville's Upstream Tributaries SP-F3.1, Task 1B |
| Attachment 4 | Final Report, Fish Species Composition and Juvenile Bass Recruitment in the Thermalito Afterbay SP-F3.1, Task 4A |
| Attachment 5 | The Final Report, Evaluation of Interactions Between The Lake Oroville Fishery and Upstream Tributary Fisheries SP-F5/7, Task 3 |
| Attachment 6 | Draft Report, The Effects of the Feather River Hatchery on Naturally Spawning Salmonids SP-F9 |
| Attachment 7 | Addendum to Phase 2 Report Evaluation of Project Effects on Instream Flows and Fish Habitat SP-F16 |
| Attachment 8 | Final Report, Project Effects on Water Quality Designated Beneficial Uses For Surface Waters SP-W1 |
| Attachment 9 | Final Report, Project Effects on Groundwater SP-W5 |
| Attachment 10 | Oroville Facilities Relicensing Environmental Study Reports Comments and Errata |
| Attachment 11 | Pending Study Plan Report Completion Schedule as of February 23, 2005 |

I. Introduction

Attendees were welcomed to the EWG meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and their affiliations. The desired outcomes of the meeting were discussed as listed on the meeting agenda. The meeting agenda and list of meeting attendees are appended to this summary as Attachments 1 and 2, respectively.

II. Action Items – November 27, 2004 EWG Meeting

Ted Alvarez (DWR) reported that the November 27, 2004 EWG meeting summary is posted on the relicensing web site. The Facilitator reviewed the status of the action item from the November EWG meeting as follows:

Action Item #E138: Provide reports SP-F5/7, Task 3, SP-F9, and SP-F3.1, Task 4 to the EWG as soon as available.

Status: The reports were presented and discussed at this meeting, see summary below.

Action Item #139: Provide Eric Theiss with Study Report Comment Process letter presented by Rick Ramirez to the Plenary Group.

Status: Eric Theiss (NOAA) acknowledged that the letter was received but added that NOAA was not satisfied with DWR response to comments provided by NOAA. He added that NOAA hopes to continue the discussions of their interests with DWR.

Action Item#140: Send Bob Baiocchi the stocking agreements between NOAA, DWR, and DFG, and the FERC order that describes the stocking program requirements.

Status: Eric See (DWR) sent the information to Bob Baiocchi (Baiocchi family).

III. Study Deliverables

Reports

SP-F3.1, Task 1B

The Final Report, Fish Species Composition in Lake Oroville's Upstream Tributaries SP-F3.1, Task 1B (Attachment 3) was distributed to the EWG and discussed. Adrian Pitts (SWRI) summarized the study methodology and described the native and non-native game and non-game species present in the upper Feather River. Adrian explained that the report also reviewed current lake fishery management practices to identify potential activities that could affect upstream tributary fish species composition.

SP-F3.1, Task 4A

The Final Report, Fish Species Composition and Juvenile Bass Recruitment in the Thermalito Afterbay SP-F3.1, Task 4A (Attachment 4) was distributed and discussed. Adrian Pitts summarized the study methodology, described the species observed, and explained how project operations result in water level fluctuations that de-water bass nests, likely limiting juvenile recruitment. He noted that the Afterbay does provide good habitat, a strong forage fish base, and low angler harvest rates due to large amounts of aquatic vegetative cover, which may offset the effect of water level fluctuations. The report concludes that black bass populations in the Afterbay are likely to persist under current operational conditions but could be affected by increases in water level and/or water temperature fluctuations during bass spawning.

SP-5/7, Task 3

The Final Report, Evaluation of Interactions Between The Lake Oroville Fishery and Upstream Tributary Fisheries SP-F5/7, Task 3 (Attachment 5) was distributed and discussed. Adrian Pitts summarized the study methodology and described the relationship between Lake Oroville water surface elevation and potential interactions between lake and tributary fisheries. He reminded the EWG that Lake Oroville is managed as a 'two-story' fishery, with a self-sustaining warm-water fishery and a cold water fishery maintained through stocking. The report describes the Lake Oroville coho salmon stocking program and results of the 2002-2003 survey that found no coho salmon in any of the survey's upstream tributary reaches. The report concludes that current fishery management practices and project operations are not likely to cause negative interactions between lake and tributary fish species assemblages. However, management practices that include stocking rainbow or brown trout in Lake Oroville could potentially affect resident populations of these species in upstream tributaries.

SP-F9

The Draft Report, The Effects of the Feather River Hatchery on Naturally Spawning Salmonids SP-F9 (Attachment 6) was distributed and discussed. Randy Brown (DWR) described the history of the Feather River Hatchery (FRH) from construction in 1967 through to the current contributions made to salmonid recovery efforts as one of several hatcheries in the state. He explained that the hatcheries have evolved into production hatcheries, resulting in too many hatchery fish in proportion to wild stocks. He described current efforts to evaluate the spring-

run Chinook salmon in the Feather River through a marking program. The EWG discussed straying rates and their relationship to release locations, marking schemes and limitations, and disease transmission issues. The report includes recommendations for future hatchery operations and oversight. Eric Theiss expressed his concern regarding unanswered questions related to straying rates. He asked if DWR management considers their commitment made in a letter to NOAA in 2003 to be fulfilled. Heidi Rooks agreed to take the question to DWR management for resolution and to get a response to Eric Theiss.

SP-F16 Addendum

An Addendum to Phase 2 Report Evaluation of Project Effects on Instream Flows and Fish Habitat SP-F16 (Attachment 7) was distributed and discussed. Brad Cavallo (DWR) explained that the addendum provides PHABSIM results for fry and juvenile steelhead trout and Chinook salmon. The EWG discussed the difficulty in interpreting these curves and the limitations within the model to address vegetative cover characteristics. Brad described an interagency meeting where the participants agreed that the curves did not support a clear alternative or ideal discharge level and that efforts to improve physical habitat for juvenile salmonids should instead be focused on improving habitat complexity using side channel habitat, riparian vegetation, and other in-stream enhancements such as large woody debris. Brad added that water temperature might be a better way to manage for fry and juveniles than flow release manipulation in the Feather River.

SP-W1, revised

The Final Report, Project Effects on Water Quality Designated Beneficial Uses For Surface Waters SP-W1 (Attachment 8) was distributed and discussed. Ryan Martin (DWR) explained the changes from the original report including conversion corrections and the addition of text to the low-level nutrient discussion and table related to salmon carcasses upstream.

SP-W5

The Final Report, Project Effects on Groundwater SP-W5 (Attachment 9) was distributed and discussed. Ryan Martin explained the results of this study on the hyporheic connectivity between the Feather River and four ponds within the Oroville Wildlife Area. Two ponds surveyed, Upper Pacific Heights Pond and Mile long Pond, exhibit high connectivity to the Feather River sharing both physical and chemical characteristics. Water levels support the conclusions. The other two ponds did not exhibit as high a degree of hydraulic conductivity with the river. Ryan reported that during most of the year, the pond water temperatures were higher than those measured in the Feather River and were closely correlated to ambient air temperature. The EWG discussed the potential effects on Feather River water quality from pesticide spraying at the ponds and potential ecological effects on the ponds resulting from ramping rates within the Feather River.

Environmental Studies Errata Document

Ted Alvarez (DWR) distributed the Oroville Facilities Relicensing Environmental Study Reports Comments and Errata (Attachment 10) and reported that DWR had received comments on seven of the EWG study reports. The EWG discussed the seven reports receiving comments individually. Bob Baiocchi's (Baiocchi family) comments stated that he needed to see comments from NOAA before he can provide his comments. Participants asked Eric Theiss if Bob Baiocchi had contacted NOAA for comments. Eric Theiss indicated that NOAA had not had any additional contact with Bob Baiocchi on this subject.

IV. Settlement Efforts/Wrap Up

Ted Alvarez distributed a handout showing the expected completion schedule for the remaining study plan tasks (Attachment 11). Ted explained that five EWG tasks, which are primarily extensions of original studies or which cover the second year of monitoring called for in some of the studies, remain to be finished this year. Three additional tasks that deal with effects of future operations have an unknown delivery date because future operations will be dictated by the results of the settlement negotiations process currently underway. DWR believes that these three tasks should be deferred to the CEQA/NEPA process. Noting that the collaborative has moved into the negotiations phase of this process, DWR suggested that rather than re-convening the EWG for a meeting to review the remaining reports, the reports be posted on the relicensing Website with notifications sent out via E-mail. The EWG agreed to review the reports via the Website and provide DWR with any comments. The EWG also agreed that reports dealing with future operations should be discussed within the context of the CEQA/NEPA process. Heidi Rooks (DWR) thanked everyone for their participation in the collaborative technical work group. No future meeting was set for the EWG.